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# **Who gets to play? Investigating equity in musical instrument instruction in Scottish primary schools**

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## **Abstract**

There is a widely held view that learning to play a musical instrument is a valuable experience for all children in terms of their personal growth and development. Although there is no statutory obligation for instrumental music provision in Scottish primary schools there are well-established Instrumental Music Services in Local Education Authorities that have been developed to provide this facility for pupils. This paper presents the findings of a study that aimed to investigate the extent to which the opportunity to undertake instrumental instruction in Scottish primary schools is equitable.

The study employed a mixed methods approach. Data were gathered from 21 Scottish primary school, a total pupil population of 5122 pupils of whom 323 pupils were receiving instrumental instruction. The analysis involved an investigation of the academic profile of this group, the representation of children with additional support needs and the nature of their additional support needs. A qualitative analysis of policy and guideline documents and interviews with Heads of Instrumental Services, headteachers and instrumental instructors served to explain and illuminate the quantitative data. The findings showed that particular groups of children with additional support needs were significantly under-represented and offers explanations of the processes by which this occurs.

**Keywords:** equity; musical instrument instruction; additional support needs; special educational needs

## Introduction

Access to participation in musical activity is a human right situated within the context of inclusive education (Lubet 2011, 2009). The right to access to artistic activity is a generic one that is recognised internationally. Article 31 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child states that there should be ‘appropriate and equal opportunities for children to participate in cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities’ (UN, 1989). For many children the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument, which is an aspect of such participation, arises for the first time at elementary school, yet recent international studies have found that some children and young people are excluded from these activities (Nabb & Balcetis 2010; McCord, 2009). This paper presents the findings of an empirical study carried out in 21 Scottish primary (elementary) schools that sought to determine if there was equality of opportunity for all primary school children to receive instrumental lessons and where this was not the case to understand the processes or practice by which inequality of opportunity occurs.

There is a widely held view that musical activity is of value to all individuals in terms of their personal growth and development (Lubet 2011; Črnčič, Wilson & Prior 2006; Eisner 2002; Mills 1993) as well as being of social value (Odena 2007; Mazur 2004; Cope 2002). Evidence from national and international research studies suggests that some children and young people are denied access to music activities in general and instrumental instruction in particular. A recent American study, (Nabb and Balcetis, op.cit.) found that young people with disabilities were excluded from instrumental music programmes. In a small-scale Australian study, McCord (op.cit.) showed that students with physical disabilities and autism were generally left out of music activities. A Scottish Arts Council commissioned study that investigated the provision for music education in Scotland (SAC 2003) identified a need for better support of young people with ‘special educational needs’ (sic). In 1998 the Scottish Office commissioned a report investigating musical instrument instruction in Scotland. The report stated that there was a need for further investigation of provision for children with special educational needs (sic) (Hall, 1999, p.20); to date this investigation has not been carried out.

The present study is situated within the context of a Scottish system that has applied the broad and inclusive concept of Additional Support Needs to its legislative and policy frameworks. This concept refers to any child or young person who, for whatever reason, requires additional support for learning and this may be short-term. This will include disadvantaged children who would not necessarily have been recognised within the concept of Special Educational Needs. At the same time Scotland has developed and recently implemented a new curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004). It is a flexible curriculum for all children and young people from 3-18. The philosophy of the curriculum is an inclusive one. It includes all educational experiences planned for all children and young people regardless of the educational setting. Its stated purpose is:

‘to ensure all the children and young people of Scotland develop the attributes, knowledge and skills they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future’ (LTS, 2010).

This inclusive stance reflects guidance given in *Supporting Children's Learning: A Code of Practice* (Scottish Executive 2005, revised 2010) on the implementation of the most recent legislation, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, 2004 as amended 2009. The guidance makes clear that all children with additional support needs have an entitlement to having their needs met through appropriate support in all curricular areas. The Act stipulates that Local Authorities (LA) and thereby schools and teachers within those authorities have a duty towards all children to ensure 'the development of personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential'.

The profile of instrumental instruction in Scottish schools has been raised by recent events. Notably there have been expressions of concern that budget cuts should not have a negative impact on the opportunity for Scottish children and young people to receive instrumental instruction (Hepburn 2010). This opportunity should be equitable. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), the largest teaching union in Scotland recently disseminated a *Charter for Instrumental Instruction* (2010) to every Scottish school outlining the value of the instrumental instruction. It states that:

'Every school pupil in Scotland should have the opportunity to receive specialist tuition on a musical instrument or in voice as part of their school education' (EIS 2010).

### ***Equity and equality of opportunity***

Equity and equality are not synonymous. Secada (2002;1989) argued that there is a qualitative - quantitative distinction to be made between the two, equality having a statistical meaning based on groups rather than the individual (Secada 2002, p.25). Equity is a complex construct but it can be seen to be about fairness and in this sense equality of opportunity at the level of the individual which is quite different from equality in the sense of entitlement or the distribution of resources. This study applied an understanding of equity as the equality of opportunity that every individual has not only in terms of what is offered but also in terms of what is brought to the experience; this acknowledges a need to recognise that the starting point may be different for different individuals. Although the rhetoric of inclusion and participation may aspire to equality of opportunity it carries no guarantee. Participation in any activity requires more than mere physical presence (Allan & Cope 2004) and equality of opportunity must mean more than simply being offered a chance to take part. Sen (2010) argues for a need to consider opportunity on the basis of capability which he describes as 'the power to do something' (ibid. p.19). The extent to which people have the opportunity to achieve the things they value can also be considered in relation to the social and cultural capital that individuals have (Bourdieu 1977). These constructs help to explain why inequality continues to be replicated in schools (Monkman, Ronald & Thérarène 2005). Considered as competences that are not equally distributed they become 'capital' in the advantage that they bestow on the holder. Cultural capital is acquired through exposure to a range of cultural experiences in and beyond home and the school.

Children who have rich musical experiences, particularly in a western classical tradition, will be advantaged by any selection procedures used in schools and designed to identify children with musical 'potential'. This potential may be misconstrued as innate talent or giftedness

leaving many children who have not had similar prior experiences to be excluded (Howe, Davidson & Sloboda 1998). The participation of particular groups of children and young people in musical activity is recognised as problematic. The Scottish Arts Council audit of youth music in Scotland (SAC op.cit.) identified the need for better opportunities for minority ethnic groups and those with 'special educational needs' to be involved in music activities. Reporting on a study that took place in Wolverhampton, England, Bunting (1992) questioned why so few boys, black and Asian children, slow learners (sic) and other children with special educational needs learned to play (Bunting, 1992, p.185).

The right to engage in musical activity should not be constrained by factors related to cognitive or physical attributes (Johnson & Darrow 1997). Arguably the cultural hegemony of the western classical music tradition restricts opportunity to participate in musical activity. Reimer (1997) has argued that a culture of performance has served a minority at the expense of the majority, concluding that 'we have so emphasised the few over the many that most people regard us as special education for the interested and talented' (ibid. p.33). Furthermore what constitutes quality and aesthetics in the performing arts should be explored and if necessary challenged (Reimer, op.cit.). At a recent pre-show discussion chaired by the Australian dancer and performer Caroline Bowditch, now Dance Artist for Change with Scottish Dance Theatre, Bowditch, herself a wheelchair user, considered whether disabled performers are capable of excellence posing the questions: 'What do we see as best practice? Who measures quality, what is it and how do we know we've got there?' (Bowditch 2010). Bowditch's questioning of what constitutes excellence in artistic performance highlights the futility of comparisons particularly when qualitative distinctions are made on the basis of a set of rigid performance criteria. Comparing Pavarotti with Sinatra or the playing of the Malian guitarist Ali Tarka Fouré with that of Segovia brings the complex issue of perceived quality into sharp focus. The performing arts are about expression, in imposing the cultural hegemony of western classical traditions many individuals are denied the opportunity to express themselves (Lubet, 2009).

Qualities such as expressiveness, creativity, passion and emotion are not easily quantifiable but in musical performance there are measurable qualities of accuracy relating for example to rhythm and pitch. Within this context a selection procedure for identifying potential musicians in schools may appear to be reasonable, however there are several problems with this approach. The validity of the tests themselves is questionable (Mills 2001), children may not understand the language used in a musical context, for example 'high' and 'low' may only be understood as spatial terms rather than in relation to pitch. Prior musical experiences in the home and elsewhere may privilege some children. Selection on the basis of physical characteristics may eliminate children who have much to gain from learning to play an instrument. Many renowned performers would fail by such criteria, for example Django Rheindhart, Evelyn Glennie, Tommy Iommi, Ian Dury, Stevie Wonder to name a few. Fundamentally a selection process based on performance criteria overlooks the essentially intrinsic nature of musical activity as an expressive and personally gratifying experience. These issues raise important questions about the ways in which selection processes for instrumental instruction construe children with additional support needs.

## **Research questions**

Four research questions formed the basis for this research:

Is there equality of opportunity for primary school children to receive instrumental music lessons?

What are the processes for selection of primary school children to receive instrumental music lessons?

What are the conceptual understandings which implicitly/explicitly inform the processes of selection?

What aspects, if any, for continuing professional development in instrumental instruction might be revealed?

## **Study design**

The study used a mixed-methods triangulation approach designed over two phases. A methodological triangulation allows qualitative methods to further develop findings derived from quantitative research, allowing for a deeper level of understanding. Further, qualitative methods can also clarify the results of quantitative findings, for example inconsistency. Crucially, triangulation is also a useful strategy for increasing validity of findings (Denzin, 1978). In the present study, triangulation allowed investigation into differing policies and guidelines of each LA.

Phase one involved gathering quantitative data from LAs and schools. These data would reveal: the number of children in the sample group of primary schools receiving instrumental instruction; a profile of the academic attainment of this group and the representation of children with additional support within this group. Schools were requested to provide information on levels of attainment in mathematics and language because these are the two core curricular areas in which schools record the attainment of individual children. Phase two involved a qualitative analysis of policy documents and guidelines provided by the LAs and semi-structured interviews with Heads of Service for instrumental instruction; primary headteachers and instrumental instructors. This would illuminate the quantitative data by giving an insight into the purpose of instrumental instruction as stated in policy documents and as perceived at LA, school and instructor levels and applied through the process of selection. The study did not seek to make comparisons across LAs or individual schools.

## ***Participants***

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted (Patton 1990). Three neighbouring LAs were invited to take part in the study. Each of these LAs provides instrumental instruction in their schools through their instrumental instruction Services division. The Head of Service for instrumental instruction in each LA was contacted and invited to participate. All Heads of Service agreed to provide background information requested within surveys relevant to instrumental instruction in their LA and to identify ten schools in their own LA to be contacted for more specific information. Following on from the survey, individual semi-structured interviews were carried out with the three Heads of Service, who in turn identified instrumental instructors and headteachers for interview.

## ***Phase 1***

### ***Survey***

The Heads of Service in each of the three areas provided background information requested in surveys. The surveys sought the following information: the roll of the school, instruments available to the school, number of pupils receiving instrumental instruction, provision of instruments (whether they need to be purchased/lent), if fees were applied for instrumental instruction and if instrumental instruction was available in special schools and units within the LA. Each local authority was requested to provide policy documents and guidelines on instrumental instruction.

Once schools were identified, headteachers were contacted by telephone requesting their involvement, all agreed to participate in the study. Following consent, the schools were emailed survey forms for pupil and school data. All data collected regarding the authority, school and pupils were anonymised. The following information was sought:

- Roll of school
- The number of all children currently receiving instrumental lessons (within each school)
- The number of children within the school identified as having additional support needs
- Type of instruments available
- The levels of attainment (in language and mathematics) of children currently receiving instrumental instruction
- Indication of ability group, in language and mathematics, of individual children (if schools set by ability)
- The number of children currently receiving instrumental lessons who have additional support needs and the nature of their additional support needs
- Information, if available, to identify children who were already receiving music lessons outwith school prior to being selected for lessons within school
- Any available data on children who have expressed a desire to learn an instrument but have not been selected, for example an indication of demand for instruction
- Any children who were having to pay for instrumental instruction (one of the LAs was starting to put in place charges for instrumental instruction)

## ***Phase 2***

### ***Interviews***

Individual semi-structured interviews were carried out in each of the three LAs following the survey and gathering policies and guidelines. These interviews focussed on the following themes: the purpose and allocation of provision of instrumental instruction; the selection process; equality of opportunity; professional development. Interviewees had the opportunity to elaborate with any additional comments. Four interviews took place in each LA. These were with the Head of Instrumental Services; a Primary headteacher; two instrumental instructors (1 woodwind/brass; 1 strings).

### ***Analysis***

The survey data were gathered and descriptive statistics of the data were used to inform the interview questions for Phase 2. Documentation such as policies, guidelines and instructors'

handbooks submitted by the LAs were analysed for content. Interviews were transcribed and analysed for content following the thematic model set out by Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor (2005). All transcripts were coded and cross-checked by two members of the research team. The final stage of the project involved bringing together the data from each phase in order to identify any common themes and to undertake more detailed exploration where significant tensions were emerging. The original research questions were revisited as a guide to the process of analysis and a general inductive approach taken in which close reading of the texts facilitated coding and the emergence of key themes in the process of selection.

## **Results**

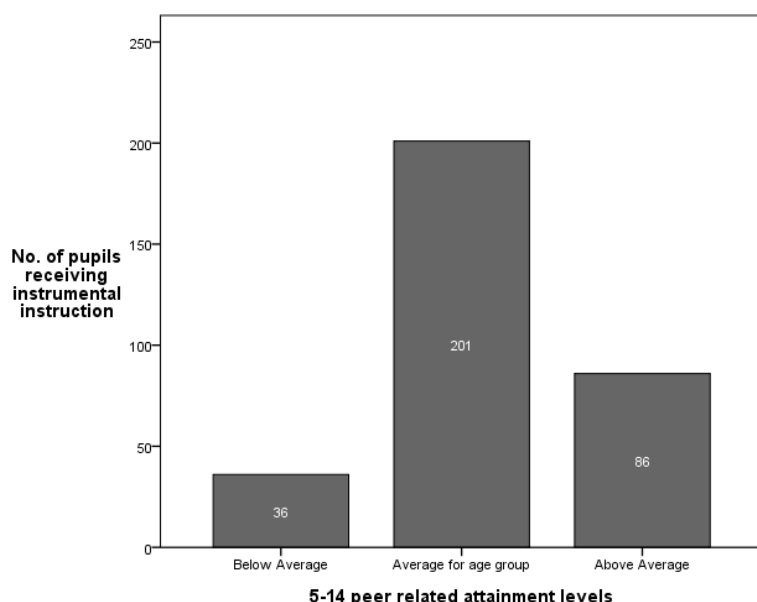
### ***Initial Quantitative Data***

The survey forms were returned by 21 of the 30 schools. These provided data from a total pupil population of 5122 pupils of whom 323 pupils were receiving instrumental instruction including those pupils recorded as having ASNs. Pupils were of both gender between 7 and 12 years of age.

### ***Attainment profiles of children receiving instrumental instruction***

The schools provided information for each pupil receiving instrumental instruction with regard to levels of attainment. All schools set by ability in the maths and language. The majority of children were in the highest ability groups for maths and language. Most schools had four levels of ability groups. There were only two children who appeared in a fourth level group. Children's positions in ability groups reflected the levels of attainment recorded through the Scottish 5-14 assessment levels (SOED 1991). It should be noted that with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence schools are moving away from the 5-14 levels but at the time of the study these records were still valid. In 5-14 attainment is assessed and recorded at six levels. The pupils were classified into groups based on the 5-14 levels of: very high, high, average, low, and very low. These classifications were based on *average* being the norm within 5-14 criteria; *high* were children attaining one level above the norm; *very high* were those children attaining two levels (or more) above the norm, *low* represented 1 level below the norm and *very low* was two (or more) levels below the norm. Figure 1 indicates the attainment levels for the 323 pupils receiving instrumental instruction. The majority of pupils receiving instrumental instruction are those attaining at average to higher level (287 pupils) compared with those attaining at lower level (36 pupils).





**Figure 1: Attainment levels for the 323 pupils receiving II**

***How many pupils with additional support needs receive instrumental instruction?***

Each school listed the number of pupils who were identified as having ASN. Table 1 shows the roll of the schools and the number of pupils formally recorded within the school as having additional support needs. It also shows number of pupils with and without ASN who receive instrumental instruction. Although the study was based in mainstream primary schools, background data revealed that two of the LAs did not deploy instrumental instructors to special schools or units within the LA.

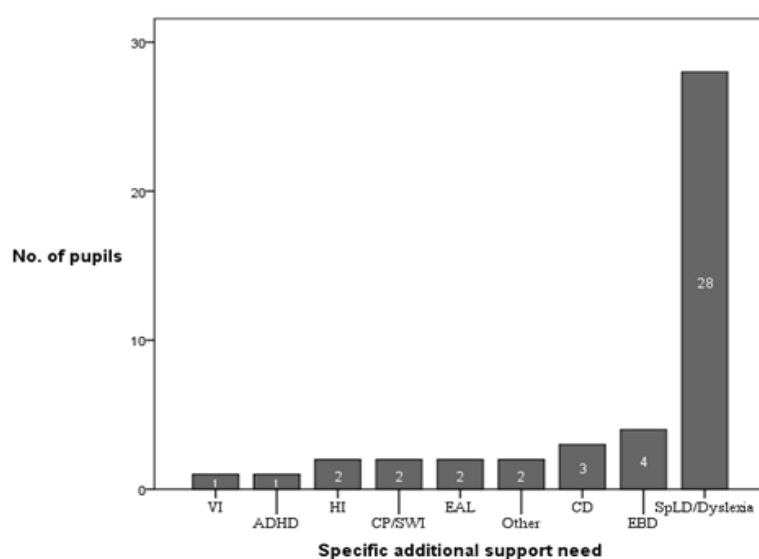
	Additional support needs		Total (Proportion)
	Yes	No	
Total roll of all schools	1157	3965	5122 (1: 4.43)
Total number of pupils receiving instrumental instruction	45	278	323 (1: 7.18)

**Table 1: Number of pupils with and without ASN receiving instrumental instruction**

***What are the additional support needs of children receiving instrumental instruction?***

From Figure 2, it can be seen that the majority of the 45 pupils with additional support needs who receive instrumental instruction are within a Specific learning difficulty /dyslexia category (n=28). There are 4 pupils recorded as having emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), 3 with communication difficulties, 2 with English as an Additional Language (EAL), 2 with social work involvement and recorded under Child Protection procedures, 2 with hearing impairment (HI), 1 recorded as ADHD, 1 who has a visual impairment (VI) and 2

(other) who were recorded as having additional support needs but these were not specified by the school.



**Figure 2: Specific Additional Support Needs**

### ***Local Authority policy & guidelines***

Policy and guidelines as expressed in each LA's handbook and guidelines reflected both the ASN Code of Practice (op.cit.) and the philosophy of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence in placing a strong emphasis on the value and relevance of learning to play an instrument. The aims were consistent with the EIS Charter (op.cit.) and included:

*'to help as many pupils as possible realise their musical potential'*

*'to ensure that as many children as resources and time will allow can benefit from the opportunity of learning to play a musical instrument'*

All the LA handbooks contained statements on the procedures for selection on the basis of aptitude through listening skills and physical suitability. However all Heads of Service described this procedure as discretionary.

### ***Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews were carried out by a member of the university research team. These were intended to be as relaxed and informal as possible as it was considered important that interviewees were made aware that the purpose of the interviews was to gather an insight and understanding into the processes involved. Individual interviewees should not be left feeling held responsible or accountable for the current situation. The interview questions were framed to encourage discussion of: the purpose of instrumental instruction with primary school children; the deployment of instrumental instructors (for Heads of Service); how children came to be selected for instrumental instruction; opportunities for children with additional support needs; professional development for instrumental instructors particularly in the area of ASN and any additional comments. The results are presented under the themes of *purpose and allocation; selection process; equality of opportunity; continuing professional development (CPD) and any additional comments made*. Although no distinctions are being made across LAs aspects specific to particular LAs, expressed by the Heads of Service, are identified.

### *Purpose & allocation*

The purpose of instrumental instruction was expressed by Heads of Service in terms of social benefits and as an opportunity for as many pupils as possible to participate. In one LA the aim was to encompass instrumental instruction in all schools; however this was contingent on funding. Instrumental services are not funded to an extent that allows instructors to be deployed to every school. In two LAs the allocation of instructors was top-down, that is, prioritised to those secondary schools which were presenting candidates for leaving exams in music. In one LA, Heads of music within the school would allocate instructors to the related primary schools once exam candidates and the rest of the secondary provision had been taken care of. In the third LA the Heads of Service allocated instructors to a school in an area of deprivation determined on the basis of the number of children who were recipients of 'free school meals' (FSM). This LA had focussed on allocating instructors to primaries in recent years and was now attempting to redress the balance by allocating more to secondary schools. Headteachers interviewed explained the purpose of instrumental instruction in terms of relevance to the new Curriculum for Excellence. Learning to play an instrument was seen to be about personal satisfaction, developing self-esteem and creative talent, to 'widen their horizons' and provide a 'well-rounded education'. One headteacher said,

*"...in the past, there has been too much of a focus on attainment, in literacy and numeracy, and I think as a profession, it's our job to identify the children that may not be, academically ...proficient, but have skills in musical and the creative arts."*

Most instructors interviewed echoed this perspective describing the holistic educational value of learning to play an instrument in terms of the 'benefit for life skills', 'social skills, 'co-ordination, listening'. Its function was also regarded as being 'to produce new musicians' and 'to achieve a good standard'. The advantages of 'an early start' were also recognised.

### *Selection process*

Heads of Service indicated that Standard procedures for disseminating information about instrumental lessons were set out by all LAs. These included information evenings for parents, information letters sent home and informal introductory events led by instructors showcasing their instruments. The selection of individual children it was argued, was left to the discretion of individual instructors – 'ultimately it's the instructor that eh, makes the decision'. Aptitude tests were not mandatory. Headteachers described the information sharing process explained by the Heads of Service. Again it was argued that selection was left to the discretion of individual instructors. One headteacher said she had 'no idea what the instructor is looking for' while others described a screening process based on ability, pitch & rhythm, led by instructors. One headteacher said it was about 'having an ear', another stated '...there are certain criteria but obviously it's open to anyone that wants it.' The headteachers expressed concerns about a lack of consultation between class teachers and instrumental instructors. There was a general lack of information sharing with instructors about children with additional support needs.

Every instrumental instructor used aptitude tests to test on pitch rhythm and physical suitability. One instructor who taught in a school in an area of deprivation did not test there, although she did in all other schools in the same LA. This was a decision made on the basis of

giving as many children as possible the opportunity to learn. There was a strong sense of instructors being willing to teach all children but they felt constrained by resourcing, *'I wish there were more instruments and more time'*, *'don't have resources to teach all children'* and by the selection process itself, *'I hate the selection process... it's a way of dealing with the numbers'*, *'a bit of a lottery'*. The importance of parental support was emphasised. One instructor described failure to respond to letters sent home about the availability of lessons as indicative of lack of interest *'...well that's an indication that they're not interested, isn't it?'*.

### *Equality of opportunity*

Each Heads of Service stated that their service aimed to cover all backgrounds and that there was equality of opportunity for all children and that they sought to include pupils with additional support needs. There was a strong sense that there was opportunity for all because instrumental instruction was offered to all: *'So many of them are in mainstream education that they have the same opportunity as anyone else'*. Headteachers maintained that opportunity was seen to be there for all children as instrumental lessons were offered through the information sharing process described. However children with additional support needs may decline that opportunity. One headteacher stated *'children with ASN (sic) have the same opportunity... [explains that there are no children with additional support needs receiving II]... I don't know why'*. Other comments included, *'it depends on what ASN (sic) they have'*; *'those on lower learning curve ... it is more the untuned percussion'*. Instructors indicated that opportunity was seen to be there for all because all children were notified of the availability of lessons and thus children with additional support needs had an equal opportunity to learn to play an instrument. Instructors described the introduction of fees for lessons as problematic, *'I've had children who've been playing for two year, really successful, you know, em, single parents...they can't afford it [and] have to give up'* ; *'This is the other thing of course, if the parents can afford the instruments'*.

There was a perceived problem of children with additional support needs *'not wanting to come forward'*. Although every instructor indicated they were willing to teach all children, for several this was conditional on perceived ability.

*'I hope it does encourage a diverse mix of pupils'*

*'I hope it works across the board ( as long as) they have rhythm and pitch'*

*'I would actively seek opportunities for children with ASN' – 'so long as they show ability... not if they can't hold the instrument'*

### *CPD*

In two LAs there had been no CPD in the area of ASN. This was recognised by the relevant HoS as something that needed to be addressed. The third Head of Service indicated that their LA had not offered any CPD to instructors in the last 4 years, prior to this there had been CPD offered in specific areas: autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, visual impairment and hearing impairment. There is an issue of what the focus of any professional development should be, perhaps an understanding of broader concepts of inclusion and language may be of more value than specific disabilities:

II : *I did have one pupil, about fifteen years ago, who had, who looked slightly, eh...oh, not, not mongol like, but...eh...*

Researcher : *Down syndrome?*

II : *Yeah. Down's syndrome. My apologies. Yes.*

And:

*'I've no idea if they have ASN... not unless they are handicapped, I've never really come across that (in 22 years)'*

Headteachers considered CPD a high priority with a need to extend service and range of instruments available especially untuned percussion. Discussion of CPD tended towards the development of non-specialist primary teachers in the teaching of music as opposed to the professional development of instrumental instructors. With the exception of one instructor who was aware of CPD in the area of ASN, all other instructors were concerned about the lack of professional development in this area.

*'I'm not aware of any in-service on ASN'*

*'I have had no training'*

*'No real support'*

*'No real support...need for more CPD'*

*'No CPD, I've just had to read up on it myself'*

#### *Additional comments*

Instructors were concerned about the lack of acknowledgement of the importance of the work of instrumental services, about imminent cuts to the service and about the lack of collaboration with classteachers. One instructor commented on having a concern about instrumental instructors wanting to maintain control of selection process. One LA was involved with an independent music organisation that worked in a special school in that LA for children with profound learning difficulties.

#### ***Limitations***

Although the qualitative dimension of the study helped to illuminate the statistical data it is recognised that the interviews carried out involved only a small number of participants at each level of responsibility. The study is not seeking to generalise these findings. The present study focussed on the actual processes involved in supporting or constraining equality of opportunity in instrumental instruction. The role of parents in this process was largely implicit. Further qualitative research on a larger scale might usefully explore pupil and parent perspectives more explicitly.

#### **Discussion**

The evidence from the study indicates that although it was acknowledged at every level that all children should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument the reality was quite different. The rhetoric of participation and the value of music for all were generally embraced but this did not translate into an equitable system that reflects the diversity of the mainstream primary school population. There is an indication (Table 1) that pupils with additional support needs are underrepresented for instrumental instruction. This can be best seen through the proportion of pupils recorded as having additional support needs, 1 in 4 in

relation to the school roll, increasing to over 1 in 7 when considered in relation to children receiving instrumental lessons. The deviation suggests that the pupils with additional support needs do not receive the same opportunity to receive instrumental instruction. There is a real issue not only of 'who gets to play?' but also of 'who doesn't?'.

One of the most striking findings from the study was the under-representation of particular groups of children. It is notable that from a total school population of 5122 pupils there was not one child with a physical disability receiving instrumental instruction. Within the cohort of 323 pupils receiving instrumental lessons, of which 45 were recognised as having additional support needs, only six children are accounted for in non-specific categories - the four children recorded as having emotional and behavioural difficulties and two children with social work involvement. There were also two children in the 'other' category but this was due to the absence of an account of their ASN.

In her landmark book *A sociology of special education* Tomlinson (1982) distinguished between normative and non-normative categories of disability. Normative categories are those conditions about which there is a general (normative) agreement usually through diagnosis or known aetiology. The non-normative group is comprised of children whose difficulties have no known aetiology; it consists largely of children with general (as opposed to specific) learning difficulties and/or behavioural and emotional difficulties. Tomlinson considered the existence of the group from a sociological perspective arguing that social class has a significant bearing on the identification and response to this particular group of learners. It is the largest group with additional support needs in the system and is characterised by disadvantage and low socio-economic status, recognised within the UK category of moderate learning difficulties (DCSF 2009; Norwich & Kelly 2005; HMIE 2003). Yet the category was absent in the returns of the surveys from the schools. In Scotland this may be explained by the term's gradual decline in use, however it does not explain the absence of any narrative accounts of children who might be described within this category. It appears that implicit assumptions (evidenced for example by the interpretation of a lack of parental response as indicative of a lack of interest) and more explicit assumptions (regarding children's ability to learn or ability to pay for instruction) made by those influencing the process of selection were critical in determining which children were considered suitable for instrumental instruction. This is consistent with Tomlinson's argument that there is a lack of consideration given to social and cultural issues for this group.

This analysis is supported by the attainment levels reported. The majority of pupils, 285 pupils out of 323 receiving instrumental instruction were those attaining the norm or higher. There was a vast difference between the number of children who perform at a higher level (84 pupils), compared to those attaining one level below the norm (35 pupils). Only one pupil of the 323 children was attaining two levels below the norm, potentially an indication of moderate learning difficulties.

The dyslexia category featured disproportionately. 28 of the 45 children with additional support needs were identified within this category. This represents 62.2% of the pupils with additional support needs receiving instrumental instruction, yet recent Scottish Government statistics (Scottish Government 2009) show that children with dyslexia in primary schools

represent only 7.9% of pupils with additional support needs. This over-representation affirms concerns with inequity brought about by responses to powerful single-interest lobby groups (Daniels & Porter 2007), particularly at the expense of those children who are without a forceful lobby such as children with global (mild or moderate) learning difficulties (Riddell et al. 1994). It is difficult, without further investigation, to identify the factors that may account for such a high proportion of the children with additional support needs who are selected for instrumental lessons being in a dyslexia category. At the time of selection the instrumental instructors were usually unaware of any additional support needs of individual children so it cannot be accounted for by deliberate selection. There may be social reasons to do with which children put themselves forward or come to be presented for instrumental lessons. This is consistent with Riddell's findings that children, particularly boys, from more socially advantaged backgrounds are more likely to be identified as dyslexic and benefit from additional resources fought for by their 'sharp-elbowed' parents (Riddell, 2009, p.10). However this does not account for the low and in some cases non-existent representation of pupils with more significant learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

The study focussed on those pupils who were receiving instrumental lessons. Further investigation would be required to build a profile of children who apply for instrumental lessons and are not selected. There was an awareness, expressed by several of the interviewees, that children with additional support needs, in the broadest sense, appeared reluctant to put themselves forward (or be put forward) for instrumental lessons. The failure to return a form following a letter home about the availability of lessons was taken by one instructor as '... an indication that they're not interested, isn't it?'. Social and cultural factors were not considered, the possibility of difficulties of literacy within the home or possible expenditure as barriers to participation were overlooked. Failure to consider social and cultural factors results in the reproduction of inequality (Monkman et al., op.cit.). Riddell (2009) argues that this is the product of a flawed system in need of some kind of redistribution or compensatory strategies, citing Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) she states that,

'a certain way of reproducing inequality is to ignore the fact that children do not approach education from a similar starting point, since, by accident of birth, they have differential access to a range of economic, social and cultural capitals.' (Riddell, 2009, p.4)

There was evidence of affirmative action in one LA in focussing on a school in area of deprivation. This was the only school of the 21 in which no aptitude testing took place. This decision was made at management level within instrumental services rather than by instrumental instructors within the school, these instructors used aptitude testing in other schools within the same LA. In this school every child who requested instrumental instruction received it. A significantly higher number of these children were recorded as having additional support needs. Limited resources means that in Scotland instrumental instruction is not uniformly distributed across all schools in all LAs; difficult decisions have to be made on how a finite resource can be deployed equitably. In two of the LAs deployment of instrumental instructors was on the basis of supporting senior pupils in secondary schools being presented for national qualification examinations. This top-down model potentially means the deployment of instructors into associated primary schools which are more likely to provide future candidates for national exams. There was some evidence of this being the case

in the accounts given by instrumental instructors. It may explain these instructors' accounts of some primary schools in areas of deprivation having no allocated instrumental provision. It may also explain why instructors are not routinely deployed into special schools; two of the three LAs did not deploy instrumental instructors into special schools or units. Striving for equality of opportunity requires more than what Secada describes as mere 'representation' or 'triage' (Secada, 2002, p.26). Representation signifying the presence of particular groups, triage being a response by providing support to an identified few on account of limited resources. The findings show that there was an aspiration, at all levels, of equality of opportunity but this does not appear to have extended beyond the notion of ensuring a representation of children with additional support needs, the nature of their needs does not appear to have been a consideration.

The interviews revealed the instrumental instructors as the gatekeepers of the system. This was a small number of interviews and is an area meriting further research. There was no doubt that most of the instructors wanted to teach as many and as diverse a group of children as possible and they were conscious of operating within the constraints of the system. However for most instructors this willingness was conditional on perceived ability articulated in 'as long as they can...' statements. This perceived requirement reflects beliefs about the purpose of learning to play an instrument and the culture of performance involved. For these instructors there was a strong sense that a positive outcome was on quality performance as opposed to the intrinsic value to the individual in learning to play. On this basis it would be difficult for those children with particular physical disabilities to pass selection procedures that focus on physical attributes such as hand-span for string players and lip shape for woodwind players. Besides issues of equity, it is a flawed tactic. There is little evidence of high levels of accomplishment being accounted for exclusively by innate talent in fact research evidence suggests the contrary; with training and practice, people who are not considered to have special talent can reach similar levels of accomplishment to those considered to be innately gifted individuals (Howe et al., op.cit). Furthermore selection on the basis of 'having an ear' is equally flawed, besides cultural factors that may advantage some children, the actual incidence of amusia (tonedeafness) is rare (Cuddy et al., 2005).

In no other area of the curriculum would it be considered acceptable to actively seek out for instruction only those children who might do well by external measures. Arguably this is an aspect of the cultural hegemony of the music profession, particularly the western classical tradition, which needs to be challenged. It is understandable that musicians should seek to nurture musical potential and develop future performers but there is a balance to be struck. In times of financial constraint during which services such as instrumental instruction are particularly vulnerable there is a danger in focussing resources in response to a results driven agenda at the expense of vast numbers of children who may benefit from learning to play an instrument. Alternative action can be taken; there are some schools in which every child has the opportunity, in the early years, of learning to play an instrument (Blane 2011).

The instructors identified the need for further professional development in the area of additional support needs. Rather than focussing on individualistic responses to specific categories of disability it may be useful for consideration to be given to broader themes of professional development that explore attitudinal and cultural barriers to participation and



recognise the development of inclusive practice as the realisation of rights rather than the response to individual needs.

## Conclusion

The predominant sense that equality of opportunity exists on the basis of entitlement is represented in the statement, ‘...*there are certain criteria but obviously it’s open to anyone that wants it.*’ This non sequitur embodies the inherent fallacy in the belief that instrumental instruction is actually available to all children when in fact it is dependent on meeting particular requirements. There are challenges to be addressed in realising the aspirational rhetoric of policy. Funding and resource availability may explain to some extent why harsh decisions need to be made about who gets to play nevertheless such decisions need to consider how this may be done equitably.

Equality of opportunity is more than having a representation of children with additional support needs involved in instrumental instruction. It means having the opportunity to participate fully in terms of the individual and respectful of the individual’s capacity and desire to participate rather than acceptance into participation being determined by external qualitative measures of performance and aesthetics.

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